THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO INCLUSIVE GAMING ACTIVITIES

Sonja Ahtiainen, Essi Taino

Helsinki

NON-TOXIC

In cooperation

Helsinki | MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE
FINLAND

Table of contents

Introduction

The guide that you are currently holding has been compiled as a part of the City of Helsinki Youth Services' Non-Toxic project. Non-Toxic project aims to support non-discriminatory and equality-promoting practices in digital gaming activities for young people. The project has tackled issues related to making game culture safer and compiled education resources for people working or otherwise involved in gaming activities. This guide approaches the subject from a beginner's perspective, but it is sure to offer perspectives for more experienced readers as well.

Non-Toxic – non-discriminatory gaming culture is a project carried out in three phases in 2017–2023. The project is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland. Its objective is to develop gaming culture and gaming activities into a hobby that is open and safe for all and free from hate speech and harassment. It aims to do this by focusing on strengthening the skills of educators working with young people, producing researched information and developing tools and operating methods.

Gaming activities are prone to being seen as unequivocally "good" or "bad" for children or young people by those unfamiliar with them. To dispel this notion, this guide offers important perspectives on working with young people in gaming arenas that they find to be meaningful and fun. The arenas of gaming activities are not separate from the rest of society, meaning that both inclusion and exclusion occur in them as well. As such, it is important to ensure that everyone can participate equally and safely, which is exactly what this guide provides resources for.

The guide starts with an overview of concepts relevant to equality-promoting gaming activities. After this, it provides some background information based on studies on the realisation of equality in gaming activities carried out during the Non-Toxic project. Next, the guide examines game education from the perspective of gaming activities and suggests concrete ways of strengthening game education at work. The last two sections on the creation of a safer space and communication provide practical tips for work with young people. At the end of the guide you can also find a glossary of terms related to equality and gaming culture: you can refer to it to check the meanings of any new concepts that you might encounter while reading the guide. The appendices and references also offer more information to support education work.

Read and enjoy – and think about how the issues covered relate to your own work, be curious, consider familiar and perhaps some new perspectives and put the instructions provided into practice with young people and your colleagues!

And most importantly, have fun engaging in inclusive gaming activities as part of your work!

Kind regards,

Sini Perho

Planner, City of Helsinki

Concepts

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unjustified mistreatment of a person on the basis of a personal characteristic. Everyone is equal before the law, and no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns their person. The Constitution of Finland imposes a general prohibition on discrimination (section 6), in addition to which more detailed provisions are laid down in the Equality Act and the Non-discrimination Act.

Discrimination also includes harassment, the denial of reasonable accommodation and instructions or orders to discriminate. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Discrimination is direct if a person, on the grounds of personal characteristics, is treated less favourably than another person was treated, is treated or would be treated in a comparable situation. Discrimination is indirect (i.e. structural) if an apparently neutral rule, criterion or practice puts a person at a disadvantage compared with others as on the grounds of personal characteristics. However, indirect discrimination does not include situations in which the rule, criterion or practice has a legitimate aim and the means for achieving the aim are appropriate and necessary.

> In gaming culture, discrimination can occur in a game's internal text or voice chat or in a stream, for example. Discrimination puts players in an unequal position on the basis of presumed characteristics.

Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination. Offensive behaviour is harassment if it relates to a person's age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activities, family relations, health, disability or sexual orientation and if the behaviour creates a degrading or humiliating, intimidating, hostile or offensive environment towards the person. It is essential to note that the Non-discrimination Act talks about environment in connection with harassment. Environment is a fairly abstract concept, the experience of which is tied to personal interpretations, but which, on the other hand, also arises from very concrete things, such as the words that people use and the way they talk.

> In gaming culture, harassment can include excluding someone based on personal characteristics, deliberately spoiling a game or doxxing, meaning searching for and sharing the personal data of another person.

Hate speech

Hate speech is a form of harassment. Hate speech is communication, meaning that it can consist not only of speech, but also writing, pictures, symbols, music, drawings and videos. Hate speech is not defined in Finnish legislation, but according to the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, it covers all forms of expression that advocate, incite, promote or justify ethnic hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other hatred based on intolerance in a threatening and offensive manner. Hate speech can be a crime under the Criminal Code, discrimination prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act or the Equality Act or otherwise generally harmful expression.

> In gaming culture, forms of hate speech can include team names, player tags and memes that create an environment that promotes discrimination.

Toxicity

Toxicity refers to the harassment, discrimination and hate speech that occur in gaming culture and the ways in which they typically manifest, which lead to exclusionary mechanisms and operating cultures. Toxicity is not specific to gaming culture; the same prejudices, norms and structures affect all areas of society.

Barrier-free design

Barrier-free design is about taking people's diversity into account in the design, implementation and maintenance of the built environment, as well as in the usability of tools.

Barrier-free design often refers to the physical environment, such as facilities accessible to everyone (e.g. ramps, lifts, accessible toilets). In addition to mobility, barrier-free design also encompasses issues related to vision, hearing, understanding and communication.

> The guide *Elektronisen urheilun esteettömän tapahtuman järjestäjän opas* (only available in Finnish) published by the Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL) can help you understand barrier-free design in practice.
> https://seul.fi/

Accessibility

Accessibility is closely related to barrier-free design, but also encompasses the non-physical environment in addition to the physical environment. The non-physical environment includes the social atmosphere of services along with their content, communication, signs and websites. Accessibility in communication, access to information and services means that they can be accessed by everyone and that the user can choose different ways to communicate, receive information and participate. In digital services, accessibility includes making sure that the content is clear and understandable and can be read with screenreaders. The information provided by public organisations or service providers should be available through a wide range of channels in both digital and printed format.

Social accessibility refers to an atmosphere, attitudes and operating environment that take people's diversity into account and allow everyone to be themselves without fear of discrimination. Social accessibility guarantees a safe and equal service, space or administrative practice for all. It promotes equality in the different domains of society, such as educational institutions, workplaces, political decision-making and culture. Positive attitudes towards people's diversity are reflected as respectful behaviour in all encounters between people, for example. The aim of social accessibility is to achieve positive responses to the questions "Is this space for me?", "Do I belong here?" and "Do I feel safe here?".

> The Regional State Administrative Agency's accessibility guidelines
> https://www.webaccessibility.fi/

Non-Toxic Studies

NON-TOXIC

– Pelikasvatusta kotona ja nuorisotyössä,
Miia Siutila, 2020

Parents and youth workers were moderately familiar with games and gaming cultures.

Many parents wanted more information about games in a practical format.

55%
of parents

and **13%**
of youth workers

indicated that young people had not reported encountering harassment in games or gaming culture to them.

Parents indicated that they had intervened in their offspring's poor gaming behaviour by making remarks, imposing prohibitions or limiting gaming. However, these measures seemed to provide only temporary help.

Youth workers indicated that they had succeeded in influencing young people's behaviour by discussing the potential impacts of shouting and name-calling, and teaching about better communication methods and the importance of encouragement.

The second study of the project took the form of two surveys focused on parents' and youth workers' experiences of the harassment encountered by young people in gaming activities. The surveys were distributed through various channels, such as social media, the City of Helsinki's own website and shared by various actors. The survey targeted at youth workers received a total of 91 responses. The survey targeted at parents/guardians received a total of 136 responses.

NON-TOXIC

– Selvitys kilpailullisia tietokone- ja konsolipelejä pelaavien nuorten kokemuksista vihapuheesta ja häirinnästä
Ella Alin, 2018

Approximately **90%**
of the respondents had experienced hate speech or harassment.

70%
had been targeted by hate speech and harassment themselves.

Men under the age of 18 and women reported having experienced significantly more hate speech and harassment than the rest.

90%
of the respondents hoped that hate speech and harassment would be dealt with.

Over **80%**
of the young people hoped that players would be more supportive of each other.

Responsibility for bad behaviour was seen as resting primarily with the players themselves, gaming companies and moderators.

Harassment had an impact on the respondents' game choices and ways of playing games.

The first study of the project was carried out at the Assembly event. It involved surveying 15–29-year-old young people who actively play competitive games about their experiences of disruptive behaviour in gaming culture. The survey received a total of 156 responses.

Game education

Game educators play a key role in influencing the equality and inclusiveness of gaming culture. Game education is a part of media education, which is just as important in contemporary digital society as traffic education or health education, for example. Any adult who regularly interacts with children and young people can be a game educator, and their attitudes towards gaming contribute to young people's impression of game culture. After all, young people learn a great deal from the adults around them and also serve as peer educators for other young people.

In Finland, digital games have been stereotypically seen as a hobby for white cis boys and men. Although gaming as a hobby is gradually becoming more diverse thanks to the hard work of various actors, there are still discriminatory structures and attitudes in gaming culture that hinder young people's equal opportunities to participate in it. If the community is not actively removing obstacles hindering participation in game activities, it is most likely inadvertently maintaining them. **Even just the visible use of inclusive tools, approaches and operating models contribute to the prevention of harassment and discrimination**. Fostering the social well-being of the community supports participants' commitment to activities and improves performance both in games and among the organisers. By creating safer and more accessible gaming communities for everyone, educators can influence the broader transformation of gaming culture into a hobby that is open to all and free of hate speech and harassment.

Ideally, responsibility for improving inclusivity in gaming activities should be assigned to a specific person or a team of people within the organisation or community who can undergo training, use their working time for it and who have the necessary authority and motivation for the work. If the responsibility for the systematic improvement of inclusivity is not assigned to anyone (or if responsibility is shared equally by everyone with nobody overseeing it), it is prone to being neglected in favour of other everyday tasks. Information sharing and the continuation of improving inclusivity must be ensured throughout the organisation to ensure a high standard of realisation in the event of personnel changes as well.

Checklist for inclusive game education

- [ ] **Ask questions, be interested.** Listen and encourage.
An open atmosphere facilitates discussion in the event of problems.

- [ ] **Respect gaming as a hobby,** even if it is unfamiliar to you or difficult.
Gaming can be a social activity that results in real relationships.

- [ ] **The online world is subject to the same rules of conduct and equality laws** as the world outside of games.
Games are part of the real world.

- [ ] **Play games yourself.** Get to know games and their mechanics. Watch matches and game videos.

- [ ] **Learn to recognise** how discrimination and harassment manifest in games (the most common terms and methods, doxxing, etc.)

- [ ] **If you notice language that is discriminatory or disruptive,** broach the subject. Ask for clarification if you do not understand the terms being used.

- [ ] **Being emotionally engrossed in games is not toxic** in and of itself. However, it must not come at the expense of minorities or other people. Name-calling someone gay or a whore is not fair play.

- [ ] **Putting a stop to gaming is not a solution to harassment.** Support players who encounter harassment by listening and being there for them. Ask them whether they know the disruptive players outside of games.

- [ ] **Find out** how to report disruptive players in the game or platform. The most popular games include internal reporting tools. Muting disruptive players is also okay.
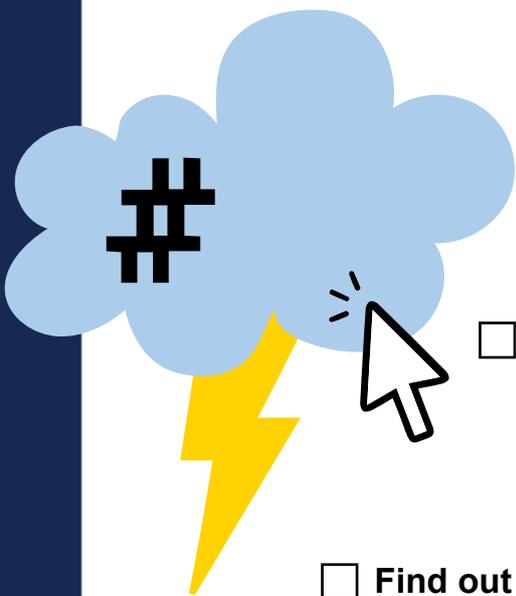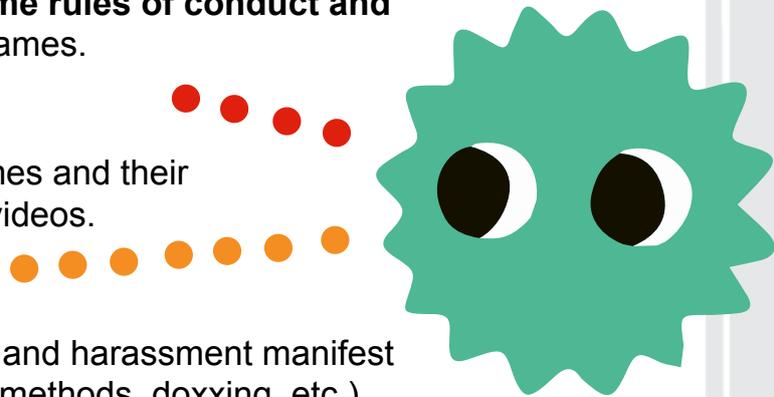
EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Emotional skills are an essential part of game education and one of the key skills of a game educator. The ability to be aware of your own emotions is the basis for emotional skills and self-awareness. This ability is also needed in interactions with other people to perceive and understand their feelings. Recognising your own emotions is important because it is only by recognising your emotions that you can see their causes and effects and influence them, if you so desire. Emotion regulation is about controlling emotions and self-control. It is the ability to process emotions into suitably sized chunks so that they do not overwhelm you and cause harm to anyone. Self-control is needed to regulate emotions, surges of emotions, impulses and desires.

Many of the structural elements of games are designed to elicit emotions in players. Games can include emotional stories and experiences, addictive monetisation models that require self-control, highly competitive settings, difficult to get achievements, and interactions with other unknown players, for example. It is therefore a good idea for a game educator to familiarise themself with the mechanisms that appeal to emotions in games and to engage in open discussion about them with young people. An educator should also be aware of their own emotional reactions in various gaming situations and think about how they affect their behaviour. For example, losing in the game in front of others can feel bad and lead one to avoid certain types of gaming situations or conceal their discomfort with dismissive behaviour. A game educator does not need to be perfect at controlling their own emotions, however; it is enough to be aware of your own stumbling blocks and strive to be open about them.

When it comes to learning emotional skills, it is essential to keep in mind and realise that all the emotions encountered in gaming situations are allowed. It is important to be able to express negative emotions as well – in appropriate ways and within the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Putting emotions into words for yourself and others can be an effective way of understanding them and thus becoming better at regulating them. Being emotionally engrossed in a game is not toxic in and of itself, but it must not happen at the expense of other players, such as minorities. Harassment or discriminatory language are not part of balanced emotion regulation.

EXERCISE FOR IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

The purpose of this exercise is to motivate and help players to pay attention to the emotions experienced during games. By identifying their own emotions and situations that elicit strong emotions, players can influence how these emotions manifest in their own behaviour.

1. Start by going over the objective and benefits of the exercise together.

2. Place a large sheet of paper on the wall or other suitable place in the room along with a felt-tip pen for writing down emotions.

3. When a player notices that they are experiencing an emotion during the game, they go and draw a line on the paper. The emotion does not need to be named or specified in any way.

4. The players should be reminded of the task of spotting emotions during the exercise, as necessary.

5. At the end of the exercise, count how many lines were written down on the paper.

6. Alternatively, you can name the emotions felt during the game on the paper. If you chose this option, you can then proceed to discuss the identified emotions and how they affected the game.

By repeating the exercise several times, you can compare whether the players experience more or fewer emotions on different days. You can then proceed to discuss the potential reasons for the day-to-day differences. Alternatively, the exercise can be carried out by having each participant write their name on the paper and then add a line under their name for each emotion that they experience while playing. At the end, you can tally up the emotions and discuss whether the number of emotions experienced felt appropriate to the participants. There is no right or wrong number.

Examples of emotions:

Joy	Dejection/melancholy	Jealousy
Enthusiasm	Guilt	Fear
Relief	Rage	Concern
Relaxation	Embarrassment	Shyness
Happiness	Anxiety	Hate
Sadness	Paralysis	Frustration
Outsiderness	Humiliation	
Disappointment	Irritation	

CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct is a list of responsibility principles and ethical rules followed by an organisation or in an activity. It highlights common values, norms and responsibilities in the activities and outlines what kind of behaviour is encouraged and what is not accepted, among other things. Writing down the ethical objectives of the organisation or activity can help ensure that they are the same for everyone and that everyone is aware of them. A code of conduct communicates to supervisors, employees and customers at a general level what they can expect from the activities, what is expected of them and how things should be. To be relevant, the realisation of the code of conduct must be monitored, it must be taken into account in decision-making and each member of the community (and especially those in power) should follow it and thus serve as an example to others.

A code of conduct should be prepared from within the operating environment to best meet the needs of the community. A code of conduct can focus on social dimensions, equality, sustainable development, information security or other issues important to the community. It does not need to be complex, as its purpose is to merely provide a framework for activities. At its simplest, it can be a short list of principles or operating models that the organisation or activity is committed to. In international gaming communities, the term code of conduct is also used to refer to common rules of conduct on Discord.

> ⓘ You can find a code of conduct template in the appendices at the end of this guide.

EQUALITY PLAN

The purpose of an equality plan is to promote equality and non-discrimination in a systematic manner. It is used to examine the objectives, realisation and development needs of an activity's or organisation's equality promotion. Whereas a code of conduct describes how things should be, an equality plan provides practical instructions on how to achieve objectives and what still needs doing. When drawing up an equality plan, you should keep in mind that equality is not just about including a specific group (such as girls) in gaming, but that its perspectives should also widely cover different minority groups and the accessibility of gaming.

The plan should preferably be drawn up collaboratively with the entire working community so as to incorporate as many perspectives and experiences as possible. The plan should include instructions for concrete actions or tools that help further the inclusivity of your activities. For example, it can include instructions on how to intervene in harassment or who to contact if you experience harassment. A good equality plan is drawn up taking into account the needs of the target group of the activities (players, customers, employees, etc.), which can be determined through surveys or shared discussion events, for example. Involving the target group in the preparation of the plan helps make hidden equality challenges visible. The plan should also be updated at regular intervals, such as annually or every two years, to take changes in the quality of the activities into account.

> ⓘ You can find an equality plan template in the appendices at the end of this guide

An organisation's steps towards inclusive gaming

1 Draw up a code of conduct.

2 Draw up an equality plan.

3 Support systematic and accessible communication.

4 Apply the principles of a safer space in everyday operations.

**5** Facilitate sufficient education and training for employees.

6 Support social and responsible management.

7 Assign responsibility for developing inclusive tools to a specific person/team.

8 Ensure low-threshold participation opportunities.

9 Ensure moderating of online activities.

10 Participate in networks that promote equality.

11 Focus on prevention instead of punishment.

LEVEL UP!
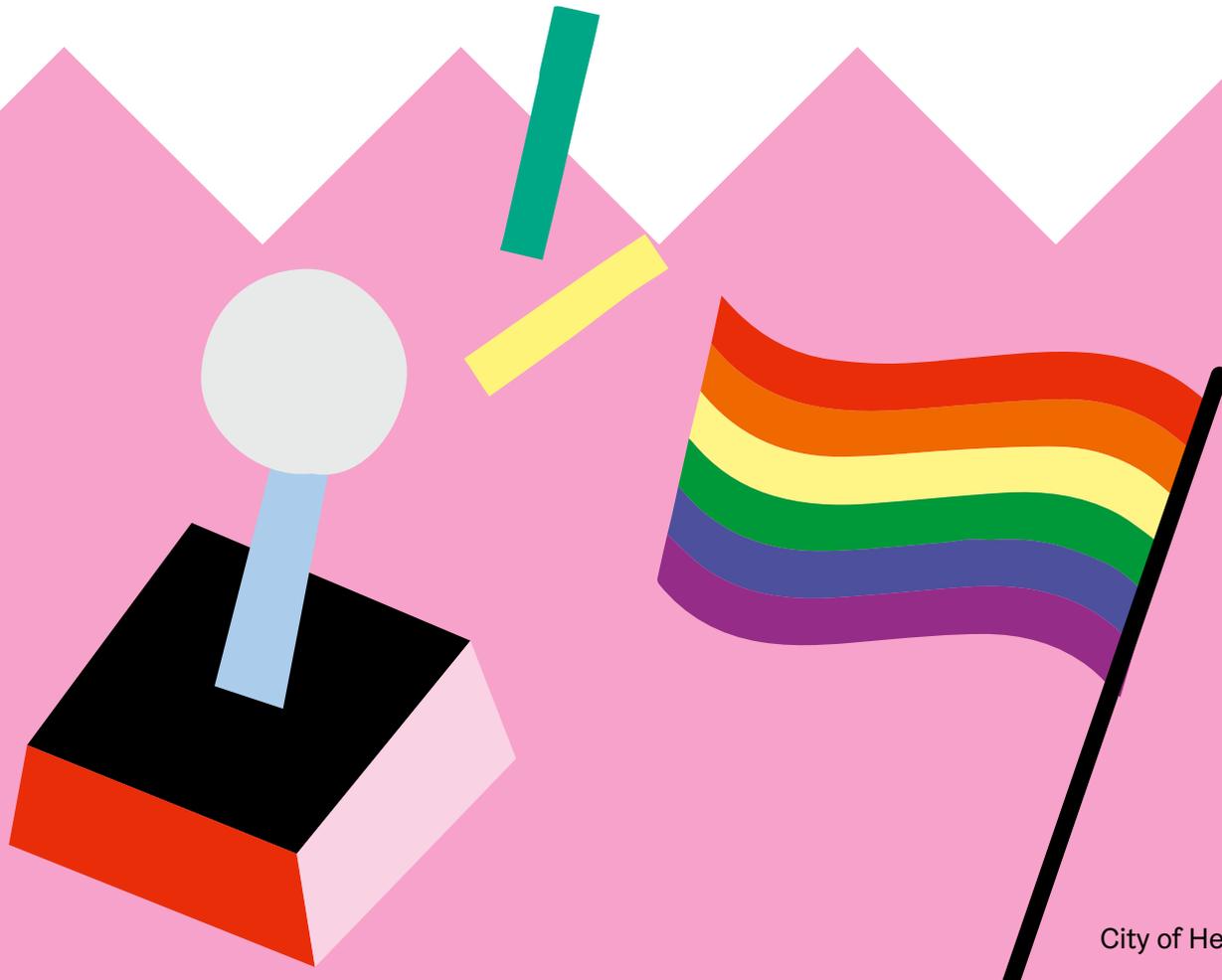
GUEST WRITER: HÄMYLAN FACILITATES EQUAL LEARNING FOR EVERYONE

Timo Järvenpää, teacher responsible for game education

Since 2016 (excluding COVID year 2020), Hämeenkylä Comprehensive School in Vantaa has had Pupil Agents, meaning pupils interested in information and communication technology, organise a LAN gaming event called Hämylan at the school in November. Each year, the event brings together a hundred 6th–9th-grade pupils who play console and computer games overnight at the school. In addition to gaming, participants also get to engage in other group activities, with various types of competitions being particularly popular. The planning and implementation of the event is carried out in collaboration with the Pupil Agents by two teachers at the school, who are also the supervisors of the Pupil Agents. In addition, several other teachers and the principals supervise the activities at the event throughout the night.

At these events, pupils interested in online gaming get to meet each other and form new friendships that would not have been possible otherwise. The events also provide teachers with opportunities to interact with pupils in the context of their hobbies, i.e. in a manner that differs considerably from traditional classroom interaction. We have received positive feedback about the events particularly from guardians, who consider them to be a safe place for pupils to hang out and play together.

HämyLAN has established itself as an important builder of community cohesion at our school. The planning of the event in the autumn is looked forward to by the Pupil Agents, who want to provide other pupils with a different way of spending time together at the school. The 100 seats of the event are booked in just a few days every year, so other pupils clearly look forward to it as well.

The attendees are a diverse sample of the pupils at our school and include pupils with different amounts of gaming experience, playing with different devices and of different ages and genders. What the attendees all have in common is an interest in gaming, which de-emphasises their different backgrounds. Every year, it is a pleasure to see both competitive and quieter pupils gaming the night away together despite not necessarily interacting much with each other during classes. Our aim is to provide each participant with a seat conforming to their preferences, be it close to friends or in a quieter spot, so that everyone can feel safe throughout the event.

There has not been a single case of harassment or bullying during the events that we have had to intervene in. Over the years, we have also had the staff of the local youth centre and the school welfare officer attend the events for at least part of the time in addition to the school's own teachers. Any instances of harassment or bullying are intervened in in accordance with the regular policies of the school. A school adult who notices or is made aware of inappropriate behaviour intervenes in it immediately and informs the school's anti-bullying group of the incident. The anti-bullying group consists of teachers and health and social services personnel from the school.

As a teacher, it is wonderful to get to enjoy gaming with pupils and interact with them in the context of their interest in gaming. Over the course of the night, you get to interact with pupils in a completely different way compared to regular teaching and engage in interesting discussions about their gaming and lives in general. In addition to gaming, the voluntary event involves learning in accordance with the objectives of the general part of the curriculum for basic education. The event promotes the transversal competences of cultural competence and interaction skills (L2) and taking care of oneself and managing daily life (L3), which are very important for future studies and employment.

The online gaming events have created a gaming-friendly atmosphere at our school. As a result, acceptance of gaming as part of young people's lives and discussion about gaming at the school have been increasing in recent years.

Safer space

In the context of the principles of a safer space, the word safety refers to the social dimension, meaning people's social attitudes and interaction. The goal of the principles of a safer space is to make everyone feel welcome regardless of their personal characteristics (gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, functional capacity, language, class or other personal characteristic).

The principles use the term "safer space" instead of "safe space" because you can never completely guarantee that discrimination will not occur in a service or space. The principles help to proactively build safer spaces in which people work actively to prevent discrimination. Each and every participant is, however, ultimately responsible for their own behaviour, which influences how safe the space is for other people. Every user of the space commits to the principles, which is why the principles for a safer space should always be drawn up in collaboration with other users. The principles should also be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. Their implementation and visible communication are an essential part of creating a safer environment.

SAFER SPACE AGREEMENT

The objective of drawing up a safer space agreement is to determine what kind of interaction, behaviour and operating methods will make people feel welcome in the space. The aim is not to examine the participants' general experiences of safety and discrimination, but rather to find concrete ways of increasing safety that are relevant to the participants. It is important to go over the process together with all the participants so that everyone feels comfortable with the agreement and can commit to it. Because of this, you should always prepare a dedicated safer space agreement for each separate activity or small group instead of directly copying it from somewhere else. The key to creating safer spaces is inclusion.

DRAWING UP A SAFER SPACE AGREEMENT

Everyone is asked:

What do I need in order to participate?

What do I need to feel safe/respected?

- Everyone writes down their own responses privately, approx. 2–5 min. After that, the responses are compiled on a large sheet of paper or in a shared document, for example. The responses can be compiled by name or anonymously, whichever feels more appropriate for the group.
- The responses are used as the basis for formulating common principles/rules.
- Procedures in the event of violations of the agreement are planned and written down together.
- The agreement is displayed in the space or on Discord, for example.
- The agreement can also be prepared based on discussions.
- The agreement is updated from time to time.
- You can use online search engines to find agreement templates and examples of the principles for a safer space.

SAFER ONLINE SPACE

"Online is offline," meaning that the online world is subject to the same rules of conduct and responsibilities as the physical world. Principles for a safer space can also be drawn up for online gaming activities to support the voices and identity of young people. The prepared principles should be visibly displayed on streams, in online communities and at virtual events as often as possible, as participants come and go and may end up missing information that is only displayed briefly at the start of a stream, for example.

To support the safety of the space, online activities and virtual events should have moderators, who can operate similarly to security staff at physical events. However, their role can vary according to the organiser's needs. Moderators must be clearly identifiable and have sufficient tools and agreed upon means to deal with disruptive people.

When establishing safer spaces on digital platforms, such as online events or Discord, it is particularly important to define the following in writing:

- On what grounds can discussions or messages be deleted?
- On what grounds can a person be prevented from participating in the service?
- Who is the moderator of the discussion and who can people turn to if they feel that the discussion is inappropriate or discriminatory?
- How long can bans last?

ACCESSIBLE GAMING SPACE

Making gaming activities more equal requires taking into account not only social situations, but physical accessibility and barrier-free design as well. The most common way to take care of accessibility is to ensure that the built environment can be easily navigated with a wheelchair or other assistive devices. Navigation can be made easier by lowering thresholds, widening doors, ensuring access to disabled toilets, providing ramps and lifts and placing furniture at appropriate distances.

However, physical accessibility also encompasses other issues, such as vision, hearing and understanding. Any signs in the space and information materials related to it should use sufficient contrast and easily distinguishable colours to take into account colour blindness, for example. Hearing-based perception can be facilitated through voice guidance, signal sounds and sound-absorbing materials. Accessible visual signs and signal sounds can also be used in online activities.

Different types of sensory hypersensitivity can also prevent participation if they are not taken into account in the design of the space. For example, insufficient lighting can cause eye strain, while excessive lighting can induce migraines. Continuous loud noises or irritating buzzing can make it difficult to concentrate and cause people to tire more easily. The use of strong fragrances can cause respiratory symptoms or headaches. These issues can easily put a strain on all participants, even if they do not trigger more severe symptoms in everyone. Participants can be offered a comfortable and peaceful break room or a quiet corner for taking breathers in if the environment or social situations become too taxing, for example.

In gaming activities, accessibility also includes providing access to various alternative game controllers, mice suitable for both left and right-handed people, adjustable desks and chairs for players of different sizes, using headsets instead of speakers to reduce noise and teaching young people how to use the accessibility settings found in games. Many popular games feature options for adjusting colours, contrast, audio, vibration, text size and remapping buttons and keys, for example. These options can even provide benefits in some games by helping players detect opponents faster or reducing hand strain compared to the default keyboard mapping, for example.

Taking care of accessibility is not just about taking into account players with disabilities; it also increases the comfort and convenience of all participants. After all, every person encounters situations during their life that make gaming more difficult, such as temporary loss of vision or hearing, hand injuries, back pain or other symptoms, for example. Designing gaming activities to be as accessible as possible from the get-go makes it so that participants will most likely be able to engage in their beloved hobby even in unexpected circumstances. Making accessibility a normal part of gaming activities also lowers everyone's threshold to use aids that are suitable for them.

HARASSMENT CONTACT PERSON

A harassment contact person is a designated, reliable person who has undergone harassment contact person training and whom people can turn to if they encounter harassment in activities. Harassment contact persons also support the organiser in creating a safer space. Due to their position of trust, harassment contact persons are bound by an obligation of secrecy, which means they can provide the organisers with general information about incidents but cannot disclose any identifying or personal information about the persons involved in them to third parties. Only in criminal cases or situations threatening the health of a person can they provide more detailed information to the authorities.

A harassment contact person serves as a point of contact, listens and resolves situations in accordance with the wishes of the person contacting them. Resolving a situation can involve listening and engaging in discussion or providing concrete guidance concerning other services or support. Sometimes the person contacting the harassment contact person may wish to discuss the situation with the harasser. In this case, the harassment contact person needs to be in contact with both parties and steer them towards a mutual understanding. A harassment contact person operating in digital environments may also have to tackle forms of harassment typical of those environments, such as doxxing or hate speech in memes.

In the event of a more serious harassment situation, the disruptive party can be removed from the activities by a moderator or security staff. The harassment contact person does not take disciplinary action. In the event of a crime, the situation cannot be handled by the harassment contact person alone or only as an internal matter but must always be reported to the authorities. If you are unsure whether you are dealing with a crime, you can ask for advice from Victim Support Finland (riku.fi), for example.

Other duties associated with the role should be defined in collaboration with the working community, as they are affected by the scale and location of the gaming activities and the number of personnel. In a smaller organisation, it may be necessary to combine the role of the harassment contact person with another position, whereas a larger organisation may need several harassment contact persons. Harassment contact persons are traditionally there for the participants, but their support may also be needed by employees. Especially at larger events, volunteer employees may need a neutral party to discuss harassment incidents with.

When defining the role, you should always examine the exercise of power and its impact on the community. As a general rule, a harassment contact person should be a person who does not have any other role strongly associated with maintaining order, imposing restrictions or making decisions (such as that of a security staff member, management group member, instructor in charge, etc.). This will ensure that their conduct remains as unbiased as possible, confidential and free of conflicts of interest related to the exercise of power in different roles.

Any person suitable for the task may serve as a harassment contact person. Skills that are considered advantages in the position include the ability to read social situations, stress tolerance and the ability to interact calmly even with very emotional people. A harassment contact person must remain as neutral as possible – they must not incite the person being harassed or judge the person engaging in harassment. They should approach everyone in a respectful manner, with a focus in solving the current conflict and supporting the person being harassed, rather than making judgements about everyone involved. When dealing with different situations, it is good to keep in mind the human perspective, according to which people are not inherently bad and should not be treated as such, but their actions can be judged and intervened in. The perpetrator is always responsible for their own actions, whether the actions are the result of an error in judgement or intentional.

WORTH CONSIDERING: HOW TO TACKLE HARASSMENT INCIDENTS Think about your gaming activities. If a young person were to experience harassment while participating in them:

- Who would they contact and how?
- Who is responsible?
- How is the young person's right to privacy realised? Are the actors bound by an obligation of secrecy and have any agreements been drawn up about it? When should parents be notified if the young person is a minor (9/13/16 years old)?

GUEST WRITER: YOUTH CENTRE FOR THEMED YOUTH WORK IN HYVINKÄÄ

Jenni Lappalainen, youth worker in charge of the themed youth centre

The Youth Services of Hyvinkää operate three youth centres: a youth centre at a shopping centre that organises open activities, a youth centre for targeted youth work and a youth centre for themed youth work. In this context, themed youth work refers to a range of activities targeted at different groups, such as activities centred around a specific hobby, activities intended for specific target groups or activities organised by young people for other young people.

In 2023, the youth centre for themed youth work in Hyvinkää is being used by and for: a gaming club, an anime club, an LGBTQIA+ café, Girls' Night, art group Poimu, a Dungeons&Dragons group, a miniature model club, a Pokemon TCG club, the Sohva group for young adults and youth evenings for people with intellectual disabilities. The youth centre, which is also known as Pointti, consists of five rooms. The rooms are designed to serve different user needs and include a kitchen-living room, a crafts room and a gaming room. The various clubs and activities are held concurrently, so that some evenings there may be up to three activities going on at the same time.

In the past, when gaming activities took place at the same youth centre as open youth work, there were some challenges in regard to who the youth centre 'belonged' to: Youth Centre Silta had served as a youth centre since 1976, and as such had a long history of being used for open activities. Because of this, people had certain assumptions as to the content and users of the youth centre and who the activities were intended for.

The operating model is not entirely new, as in 2009 there were already young people's evenings being held in the Martti district in Hyvinkää that involved facilities being concurrently used by a Warhammer club, a boffing club and an anime club. At the time, the clubs operated in adjacent rooms as separate clubs, but in a community-oriented manner, with attendees often participating in the activities of two or even three of the clubs during a single evening. Having the clubs operate in parallel expanded the circle of friends of many young people, offered broader recreational opportunities and contributed to community cohesion. Even then, some of the activities were young people's own activity groups: the boffing club and the anime club both started as young people's own activity clubs alongside the Warhammer club. Young people's own activity groups are clubs/activities that young people come up with and organise for other young people with the support of Youth Services: the young people are responsible for the content and organisation of the activities, while Youth Services provide the facilities and the necessary support for maintaining the activities.

These kinds of groups allow Youth Services to offer a wide range of content that young people want and utilise available facilities more efficiently without having to tie up supervisor resources. Of the activities and clubs held in 2023, art group Poimu and the miniature model club are also young people's own activity groups. There are youth workers present in the adjacent rooms while they convene, but responsibility for the content and organisation of the clubs lies with the young people themselves.

The possibility of organising your own activity groups promotes equality among young people: for example, young people wanting to create art do not need to procure their own resources, as they have access to shared resources, including digital drawing and painting equipment and numerous techniques. Thanks to the established process, the time it takes to turn a young person's idea into a real activity has been as short as one week in some cases.

Youth Services use Youth Centre Pointti to organise activities that young people have requested or that have become important to young people based on visitor numbers or feedback. A good example of this is gaming activities, which now have the second-longest reach after open activities in all of Hyvinkää's Youth Services, bringing together young people who have not been reached via open activities on a weekly basis. The purpose of the LGBTQIA+ café is to provide a safe space for its visitors where they can find peer support, but holding LGBTQIA+ activities also promotes equality to the young people using the facilities and their environment.

All of the activities at Pointti follow clear operating principles that have been discussed with young people and are based on the principles of a safer space and community orientation. The activities are politically and religiously neutral, and issues related to values are not discussed disrespectfully even in situations where they are being debated in the media. In addition, bodily integrity is strictly respected, and even the appearance of game characters is not criticised based on physical characteristics, for example. When playing (and in general!), everyone talks in a respectful manner: no one is allowed to insult or criticise others' or even their own gaming skills or hurl insults at opponents, even if said opponents are not listening. Establishing a culture of respectful communication has taken patience and effort, but the work has borne fruit.

The activities are free of charge, do not require commitment and the young person does not need to be identifiable. The membership card is voluntary. Accessibility is taken into account in the facilities, and we evaluate the activities and the facilities regularly based on discussions with the work community and young people.

Despite all this, we have encountered challenges in the activities and will continue to do so in the future as well – the most important thing is to learn to deal with situations, trust in professional competence and be prepared to review policies. The most common challenge at the beginning of the season with new participants is stopping insults, like calling other players noobs. You have to be prepared to uphold policies and a culture of respectful communication so that the community's way of speaking does not become more toxic. This takes patience on the part of old participants as well: some young people have learned some very rude ways of communicating while playing, and unlearning old habits is not as easy as learning new ones.

The challenge is even bigger when a young person's values (such as those learned at home) conflict with those of the youth centre. This has been the case between young people with immigrant backgrounds and LGBTQIA+ youth, with prejudices about sexual minorities manifesting as unwelcome behaviour. In autumn 2022, we had to restrict the participation of some young people in gaming activities to times when LGBTQIA+ activities are not held in order to avoid unsafe situations between young people, as we did not achieve the necessary results through discussion. Now, in spring 2023, we have been able to lift these restrictions as the situation has calmed down.

We have also been dealing with new linguistic challenges as we were unable to procure Cyrillic keyboards for the youth centre for several months due to them being out of stock and could not find a common language without a translator. This has prevented the participants from naturally forming into a community. In the end, the answer was found at the very roots of gaming activities: community cohesion between young people starts building up when they have a game that one person wants to learn – such as a VR headset – and another can teach. The common language is the shared hobby and engaging in it together: the community aspect of gaming.

Communication

Even the best-laid plans for inclusiveness within the gaming community can easily end up being ignored if they are not constantly kept at the forefront through communication and if they do not have a concrete impact on everyday activities. The organisers of the activities should plan which information should be communicated in written form and which could also be communicated visually. Effective communication can lower the threshold for participation even before the first encounter and increase the sense of belonging among the participants. Good communication involves highlighting the values of the activities and what the community expects from and offers to those participating in the activities.

High-quality, inclusive communication requires skill, effort and resources. It is very difficult to carry out quality communication alongside other time-consuming work tasks. An employee carrying out communication should be provided with training and support for the implementation of easy language and accessible communication, visual expression and the consideration of assistive technologies, for example.

Checklist for more equal communication

- ☐ **Provide alt texts for images and use simple language** in communication. The most important information should be found at a glance and by using assistive technologies.

- ☐ **Utilise symbols and non-verbal communication** (e.g. rainbow flag visible on the wall or on a Discord banner/info channel).

- ☐ **Use diverse photographs of gamers** if your activities are open to everyone. Showing only one type of gamer gives a one-sided impression of the target group.

- ☐ **Prepare materials in different languages** according to visitors' needs.

- ☐ **Use visual boards or posters** – including digital ones.

- ☐ **Create instructions about participation** for newcomers. Instructions can be provided in a fun format, such as a video or a comic.

A picture is worth a thousand words.

BETTER GAME CULTURE. TOGETHER.

NON TOXIC

#NonToxicGaming

MARKETING YOUR ACTIVITIES

Attracting new participants is key to the continuity of gaming activities. While your activities might be able to get by with just regular visitors for a while, they are in for an inevitable, slow decline if you cannot attract new participants to join. Because of this, you should plan how you will market the activities and to whom. When it comes to marketing, you should consider how different choices can contribute to prejudices or stereotypes, exclude or include different youth groups or young people's guardians and whether they are appropriate in terms of the objectives of the activities. Some of your marketing efforts should also be targeted at young people's guardians, as many young people still receive information about new recreational opportunities from their parents.

One good way to increase diversity in marketing is to engage in cooperation with various local organisations or services promoting equality. You can ask them for support with inclusiveness or suggest cooperation opportunities and organise low-threshold visits to the gaming space for them. Another good way to promote diversity is to participate in events, campaigns and themed days. For example, participating in a local Pride event may lower the threshold for LGBTQIA+ youth to try out gaming activities by allowing them to learn about the activities in a familiar environment first.

When carrying out marketing, you should also take into account sensitivity and the risk of making mistakes. The actual content of the activities must be aligned with what you communicate about them. For example, if your advertisements show people who represent minorities, but their participation is not supported by the structures of your activities, you are taking part in tokenism. Tokenism refers to practices in which an organisation benefits from giving a more diverse external impression despite not internally operating in accordance with equality principles. Tokenism often involves overemphasising underrepresented persons (such as immigrants or persons belonging to sexual and gender minorities) in external communications, for example by saying that "we are inclusive and diverse because we have one woman/one immigrant/one disabled person in our 100-person organisation." Even good-intentioned communication efforts that emphasise the diversity of gamers can end up being tokenistic. On the other hand, the exclusion of diversity from communication is a self-sustaining phenomenon, and tokenism will not be completely eliminated until the values, operating models and structures of the whole of society become genuinely equal for everyone.

COUNTERSPEECH

People have limited capacity to operate in social situations, and our behaviour is also affected by the environment. Strong emotions and ideas are easily transmitted from one person to another. If the environment favours neutral approaches or if the thinking is that "trash talk is just a part of gaming culture and does not need changing," it also gives room for hate speech and indifference.

The purpose of counterspeech is to counter hate speech by highlighting the human dignity of each individual and by providing alternative, empathetic, and positive stories of diverse players. At its simplest, it is about standing up for and supporting the subject of discrimination. It is about demonstrating through your own actions that hate speech is not acceptable and that it must be intervened in. The people being targeted by hate speech cannot be expected to change the attitudes around them, as doing so successfully requires everyone to contribute.

Counterspeech is not about providing direct responses to statements found in hate speech or directly challenging the content of hate speech. In many cases, direct challenging only leads to a negative cycle of commenting and may aggravate the situation. Instead, the aim is to emphasise positive and empathetic aspects and thus bring about a change in thinking. Counterspeech must be employed consciously, actively and persistently in order to support the promotion of inclusivity in the community. Incorporating positive stories or highlights into e.g. social media communication, marketing campaigns or discussions related to game culture gives space and a voice to the people appearing in the stories. At the same time, it tells everyone that these people are taken into account and appreciated in the activities and that they are welcome to join in.

WORTH CONSIDERING: WHOSE ACTIVITIES?
Think about your activities. Whose voices and stories do they highlight? Who is left out? How can different stories be highlighted in your activities?

IF YOU BECOME THE TARGET OF A HATE CAMPAIGN OR TROLLING…

As an educator or gamer, you may sometimes find yourself becoming the target of hate speech or trolling. You may also encounter young people who have become the target of a hate campaign and need advice. In these types of situations, you can try doing the following to calm the situation down:

1. Stay calm and respond quickly.

Keep in mind that controversies and harassment on social media and in games and online communities often blow over in a matter of days or weeks and rarely have any lasting effects outside of the online world. If the situation is due to something that you yourself did wrong, apologise openly. Deleting the original mistake can increase harassment, and it is likely that someone is already spreading copies of it on social media. The most important thing is to sincerely admit that you made a mistake and try to change your behaviour.

If the situation is not due to your own mistake, you can choose how to respond. There is no single right way to respond. For example, you can decide to stay as safe as possible by not engaging in the discussion and leaving or taking a break from the service. You can also call attention to the harassment and the people engaging in it, potentially affecting the atmosphere of the discussion and causing consequences for the harassers. However, doing so also increases the risk of more serious and prolonged harassment towards yourself.

2. Secure your social media accounts.

Enable security tools. Change your password, enable two-factor authentication, remove your own identifiers (e.g. telephone number, email address, location information) from documents visible to others. If you want to be extra careful, do not use the same user ID in different services. You can also create separate accounts for private and public use. Many social media accounts can be temporarily made private, allowing you to better control who can and cannot see them.

If you are creating a named brand for yourself around gaming, reserve your brand name on each social media platform, even ones that you do not intend to use. This way harassers will not be able to create fake accounts to impersonate you.

3. Save the evidence.

Take screenshots of harassment messages and save any user account names and other contact details/URLs. You can use these as evidence especially in cases of prolonged, severe harassment. Please note! Remember to do this before blocking users or deleting messages.

4. Block users and delete messages.

The best way to prevent hate speech from spreading online is to remove it from sight altogether. You can block and report the people engaging in harassment. The spam generated by harassers takes up space from actual discussion and can potentially even lead to an uncontrollable argument between the people defending you and harassers. At that point, it may be a good idea to disable comments or make your account private, clean up the messages and make it visible again only after the situation has calmed down.

5. Ask for help.

Sometimes the tone of the discussion can end up turning very unpleasant, and it can be difficult to stay away from of it. When this is the case, you can ask a trusted friend or acquaintance to follow the discussion for you, moderate it and filter out inappropriate messages. Harassment can also extend to your circle of friends or family members, so it is a good idea to let them know about the situation as soon as possible.

6. If necessary, file a police report or a child welfare notification.

If you are being threatened with violence or your personal data is being shared without your consent, you can file a police report. For more information on what you can do and what constitutes a crime, do not hesitate to contact Victim Support Finland. If the target of the harassment or the harasser is a minor, in some cases it may be necessary to submit a child welfare notification.

Online harassment is often aimed at seeking attention or a reaction from the target. Many harassers will cease their efforts if they do not get the kind of response they are looking for.
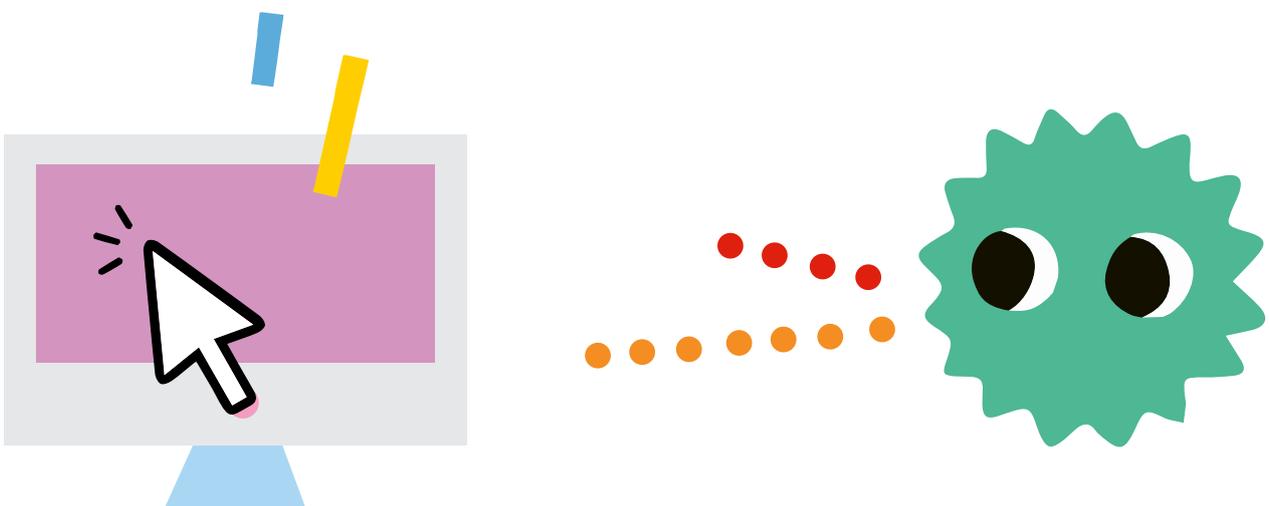
GUEST WRITER: ESPORTS IN FINLAND – MEASURES TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Mirka Otsonkoski, vice-chair of the Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL)

The Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL) serves as the umbrella organisation for Finnish competitive electronic gaming. Its mission is to improve and promote electronic sports and the activities of its members. Through its own activities, the Federation has actively sought to promote equality and non-discrimination in the Finnish esports sector. In 2018, the Federation published its first equality and non-discrimination survey, the results of which shed light on the views of esports amateurs, professionals and industry actors on the state of the sector. Based on these results, a working group prepared measures for improving the state of the sector. These measures are included in the Federation's equality and non-discrimination plans. In 2023, the Federation will be drawing up its third equality and non-discrimination plan.

Here are some examples of the measures that have been included in the equality and non-discrimination plans over the years:

Diversifying the perception of a gamer

The objective of this measure is to broaden the perception of a gamer. Gamers are often perceived as being young men, even though gaming is a common hobby for everyone. As part of this measure, the Federation updated its media bank with photographs showing representatives of other genders playing games as well. The media bank update was carried out in cooperation with the Non-Toxic project.

Creating an operating procedure for instances of discrimination

The Federation's guidelines and training for harassment contact persons was worked on in 2019–2020. A harassment contact person is a trained person at an event or in a community, for example, who provides support and help in situations where a person feels harassed. A harassment contact person can also operate in an online environment. One of the challenges faced in the provision of the training was the poor availability of relevant training material. However, in 2023 the training of harassment contact persons took a major leap forward as a result of the Non-Toxic project creating a foundation for the training. Harassment contact person training in the esports sector will begin in autumn 2023.

Surveying cooperation opportunities in the field of disabled sports

In 2019, the Finnish Paralympic Committee, which was known as the Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities (VAU) at the time, granted the Federation an Ahos grant for a project aimed at building new opportunities in esports for persons with reduced mobility and/or disabilities. The Ahos project responded to the objective of the equality and non-discrimination survey to explore the possibilities for cooperation in the field of disabled sports.

Publications

The Federation has published material related to the promotion of equality and non-discrimination, including the code of conduct for esports in Finland. The code of conduct includes instructions concerning behaviour, respecting other players and increasing equality. In addition to these, the code of conduct includes practical tips for players, organisers and players' parents.

As part of the Ahos project, the Federation has published a guide for accessible events. The guide was drawn up in 2020 in cooperation with the Finnish Paralympic Committee based on an accessibility survey conducted at the LanTrek event. The guide contains information on things that event organisers should take into account regarding accessibility, such as accessibility to wheelchairs. As part of the Ahos project, the Federation also organised a study trip to learn about the accessibility of a world championship event organised by the international umbrella organisation IESF (International Esports Federation).

Training

In 2021, the Federation organised the first Non-Toxic certification training course in cooperation with the Non-Toxic project. The purpose of the training is to learn about the state of the Finnish esports sector from the perspective of equality and non-discrimination. The joint training course, which also includes discussion sessions, encourages participants to take responsibility together. As a result of the training, the participating actors draw up their own equality and non-discrimination plans.

Actors who complete the training are issued a certificate that they can display on their website, for example. The certificate communicates to website visitors, such as players' parents, that the actor has familiarised itself with equality and non-discrimination issues and operates responsibly.

The Federation has also added a section on equality and non-discrimination in the esports sector to its other training courses, such as its coach and referee training courses.

Cooperation with the Non-Toxic – non-discriminatory gaming culture project

The Federation has engaged in close cooperation with the Non-Toxic project on equality and non-discrimination. This cooperation has included communication cooperation (such as the sharing of surveys and news), the Non-Toxic Gaming – Yhdessä parempaa pelikulttuuria ('Together for Better Gaming Culture') campaign and the preparation of the Federation's equality and non-discrimination plans, which the project workers have contributed to annually as part of the working group drawing up the plans. A representative of the Federation has also participated in the project steering group.

The Non-Toxic Gaming – Yhdessä parempaa pelikulttuuria ('Together for Better Gaming Culture') campaign was launched in the summer of 2021. The aim of the campaign is to invite gaming culture and esports actors to support non-discriminatory gaming culture. As part of the campaign, actors published their opinions on the subject on social media using the hashtag #NonToxicGaming.

Glossary

Accessibility often refers to the non-physical environment. For example, services, communication and websites must be implemented so that they are suitable for everyone, e.g. their language is understandable, the font is readable, the illustrations are intelligible, etc. Accessibility in communication, access to information and services means that the user can choose different ways to communicate, receive information and use services. For example, the information provided by public organisations or service providers should be available via different channels, such as in both digital and printed format. In digital services, such as online services, accessibility includes making sure that the content is clear and understandable and can be read with screenreaders.

Anti-racism means actions aimed at reducing and countering racism in society and the world.

Banning means blocking another player by removing them from a game and preventing them from rejoining.

Barrier-free design is about taking people's diversity into account in the design, implementation and maintenance of the built environment, as well as in the usability of tools. Barrier-free design often refers to the physical environment and is understood to mean that all facilities are easy for everyone to access (e.g. ramps, lifts, accessible toilet). In addition to mobility, barrier-free design also encompasses issues related to vision, hearing, understanding and communication.

Cis, short for cisgender, means that a person's gender identity and gender expression match their sex assigned at birth and the cultural expectations associated with it. The majority of people are cisgender. Cis is the opposite of trans; the words originate from Latin, where they have meaning 'on this side' and 'on the other side,' respectively. A cis man is assigned as a boy at birth, while a cis woman is assigned as a girl at birth.

Cisnormativity is the way of thinking and unwritten rule of our society and culture according to which all people are comfortable with the sex assigned to them at birth and express it unambiguously.

Discrimination is the unjustified mistreatment of a person on the basis of a personal characteristic. Everyone is equal before the law, and no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns their person.

According to Finnish law, discrimination can be direct or indirect and also includes harassment, the denial of reasonable accommodation and instructions or orders to discriminate. Definitions for direct and indirect harassment are laid down in the Non-Discrimination Act. Discrimination is direct if a person, on the grounds of personal characteristics, is treated less favourably than another person was treated, is treated or would be treated in a comparable situation. Discrimination is indirect or structural if an apparently neutral rule, criterion or practice puts a person at a disadvantage compared with others as on the grounds of personal characteristics. However, indirect discrimination does not include situations in which the rule, criterion or practice has a legitimate aim and the means for achieving the aim are appropriate and necessary.

Doxxing means finding out and publishing another person's personal data or threatening to do so.

Equality is a fundamental right. Equality means that all people are of equal value regardless of their sex, gender, age, skin colour, origin, nationality, language, religion or conviction, opinion, political or trade union activity, family relationship, disability, health, sexual orientation or other personal characteristic. The Non-Discrimination Act protects sexual minorities against discrimination and includes the obligation to promote equality. The Equality Act includes a provision on the protection of gender minorities against discrimination.

Everyday racism means discreet, repeated encounters that involve making assumptions about a person based on their presumed background, for example. See also microaggression.

Flaming means aggressively blaming and berating another player for everything that goes wrong in a game.

Gender sensitivity is a way of thinking that takes into account gender norms and their effects at both the individual and social level. As an education objective, it means that education makes room for every child to be their own kind of girl, boy or self-defined child.

Griefing means deliberately ruining a game.

Harassment is a form of discrimination. Types of behaviour that are considered discriminatory in Finland are defined in the Non-discrimination Act. Offensive behaviour is harassment if it relates to a person's age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activities, family relations, health, disability or sexual orientation and if the behaviour creates a degrading or humiliating, intimidating, hostile or offensive environment towards the person. It is essential to note that the Non-discrimination Act talks about environment, which, on the one hand, is a rather abstract concept, but, on the other hand, arises from very concrete things, such as the words we use and the way we speak.

Hate speech is a form of harassment. Hate speech is communication, meaning that in addition to actual speech, it can also consist of writing, pictures, symbols, music, drawings and films, for example. Hate speech is not defined in Finnish legislation, but according to the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, it covers all forms of expression that advocate, incite, promote or justify ethnic hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other hatred based on intolerance in a threatening and offensive manner. Hate speech can be a crime under the Criminal Code, discrimination prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act or the Equality Act or otherwise generally harmful expression.

Inclusion refers to the extent to which e.g. an activity or organisation includes people who might otherwise be excluded or become marginalised.

Inclusivity means an equal, non-discriminatory and inclusive approach.

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for both gender and sexual minorities: lesbian, gay, bisexual/bi, trans, queer, intersex and asexual. There are different versions of the acronym depending on which groups you want to refer to. The acronym is most commonly written as LHBTIQ or HLBTIQ in Finnish or HBTQ in Swedish.

Microaggression is an intentional or unintentional comment or act that strengthens and maintains racist or otherwise discriminatory stereotypes and advocates otherness. For example, by praising how well a non-white person speaks Finnish, the person doing the praising also indicates that they think that a black or brown person cannot speak Finnish as their native language. Even if such questions or comments appear innocuous, they are offensive to and cumulative for the subject.

Minority stress is a psychological phenomenon that describes the chronic stress caused by minority status resulting from accumulated experiences of discrimination, the anxiety and fear caused by these experiences and feelings of being different and otherness. Minority stress can have a negative impact on physical and mental health and well-being and change the social behaviour of a person.

Moderation is the monitoring of posted content. A moderator can censor messages and issue temporary or permanent bans to users who behave inappropriately Moderation keeps spam, meaning the posting of the same content over and over, in check.

Moderator is a person who monitors the appropriateness of discussion and is tasked with making sure that the discussion complies with relevant rules and remains within the limits of good taste in general.

Muting means silencing a player.

Norm criticality. A norm-critical approach involves examining the structures of society, making norms visible and questioning them. In this context, norms refer to the prevailing notions of what is considered 'normal' in society. Norm criticality is active measures to dismantle norms.

POC is an acronym for person or people of colour.

Racialisation is a social process whereby those in power ascribe prejudices to an individual or group of people based on ethnicity, religion and/or skin colour.

Racialised refers to a person/group who experiences racialisation in society

Racism means placing people or groups of people in an inferior position based on their ethnic origin, skin colour, citizenship, culture, mother tongue or religion, for example. Racist behaviour and hate speech are often motivated by lack of knowledge and fear, stereotypical thinking, prejudices and indifference. In everyday life, racism manifests as offensive acts: exclusion, innuendo, name calling, racist jokes, humiliating attitudes, expressions of contempt, gestures or even physical violence.

Safer space. In the context of safer spaces, the word 'safety' refers to the social dimension, meaning people's social attitudes and interaction. The goal of the principles of a safer space is to make everyone feel welcome regardless of their personal characteristics (gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, functional capacity, language, class or other personal characteristic).

Smurfing is when an experienced player creates a new game account in order to play with and humiliate inexperienced players.

Social accessibility means an atmosphere and operating environment that allows everyone to be themselves without fear of discrimination. Social accessibility is part of the broader concept of accessibility, the aim of which is to ensure safe and equal e.g. services, spaces and administrative practices for all and promote equality.

Stereotype means a generalised opinion of a group or an individual as a member of a specific group. People can make extensive generalisations concerning an entire group of people on the basis of a few examples. Whether a stereotype is positive or negative, it causes the subject to be seen in a one-sided manner, as a result of which they are not treated equally. Challenging stereotypical thinking is essential, as left unchecked it can expose people to bullying, racism and hate speech.

Swatting means anonymously reporting a made-up crime to the police in order to get them to raid a person's home (derived from SWAT team).

Tokenism means benefiting from making a perfunctory effort to be inclusive by including a minority group in a company's marketing, without actively supporting inclusivity and diversity in the company itself, for example.

Toxicity means the harassment, discrimination and hate speech that occur in gaming culture and the ways in which they typically manifest. The toxicity of gaming culture refers to exclusionary mechanisms and operating culture. Gaming culture is not the only domain affected by toxicity; the same prejudices, norms and structures affect all sectors of society and all fields of culture.

Transgender. A transgender person's gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth. A transgender person's gender identity can be male, female and/or something else. A transgender person may choose to correct their body to correspond to their gender identity. It is important for transgender people to be regarded according to their true gender, which is why the social and legal dimensions of gender adjustment are also important. The term 'transsexual' was used in the past, but is now considered outdated and can be considered offensive.

Transphobia means hate, fear, disgust or aversion of trans people. Phobic behaviour can manifest as invalidation, belittling, exclusion, harassment or discrimination. Transphobia is comparable to phenomena such as sexism and racism.

Whiteness refers to a social structure in which people who are considered white are seen as the norm to which non-white ('ethnic') people are compared. Due to historical and societal reasons, white people as a group occupy a dominant position in relation to non-white people.
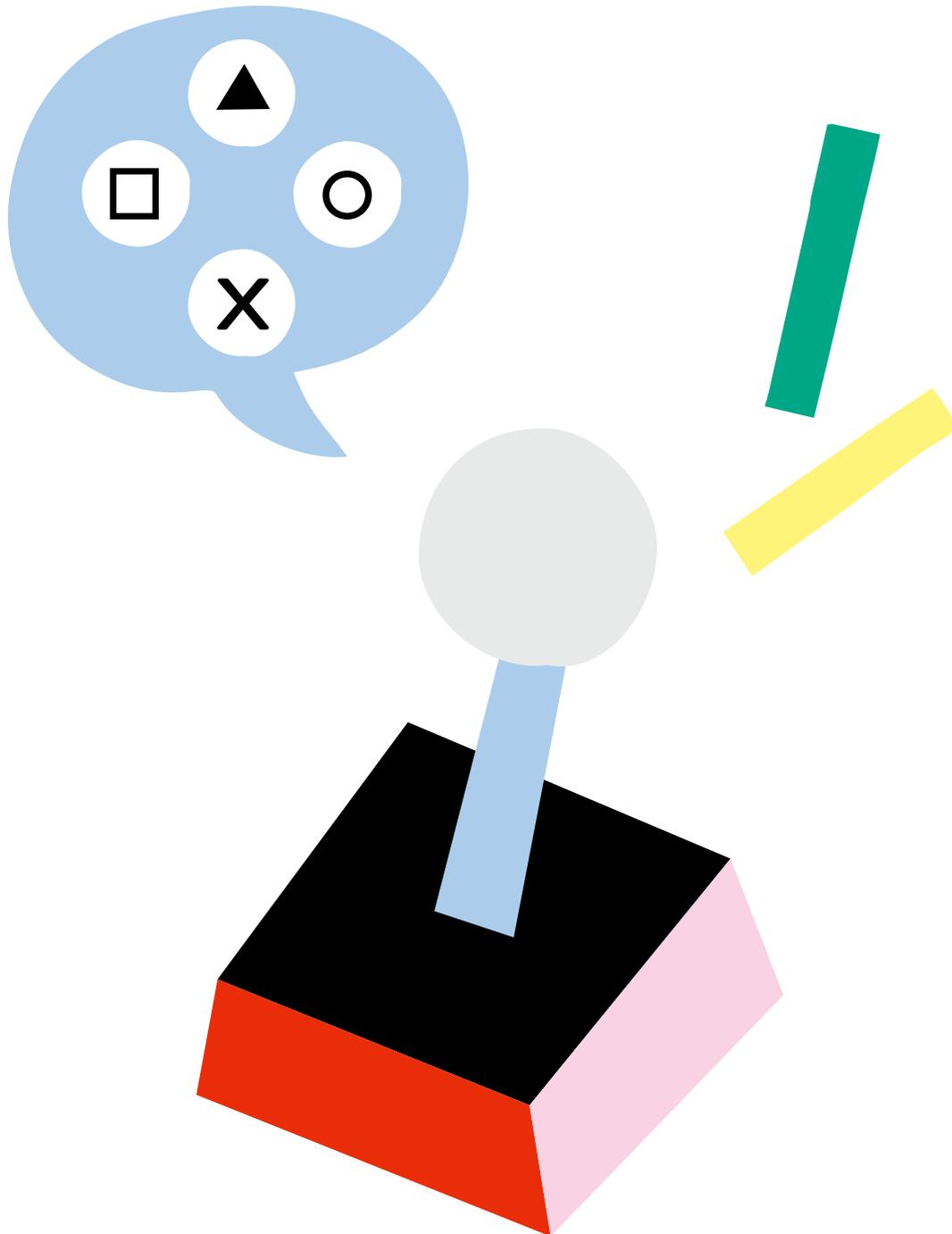
Links and tips for reading

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commis-sion-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence

Fem-R (a glossary of antiracist and feminist terms, in Finnish): http://www.fem-r.fi/sanasto/

Helsinki, Opas turvallisemman tilan periaatteiden laatimiseen (Helsinki City's guide to safer spaces, in Finnish): https://www.nuorisokanuuna.fi/sites/default/files/materiaalipankki/2022-10/Opas_turvallisemman_ti-lan_periaatteiden_laatimiseen_Helsinki%281%29.pdf

Koordinaatti (equality plan for youth work, in Finnish): https://www.koordinaatti.fi/fi/materiaalit/kaikki-mukana-yhdenvertaisuussuunnittelun-opas-nuorisotyohon

Microsoft Xbox Adaptive Controller: https://www.xbox.com/en-US/accessories/controllers/xbox-adaptive-controller

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare: https://www.mll.fi/en/

Non-toxic –project: https://nuorten.hel.fi/en/things-to-do-and-places/hobbies/gaming/non-discriminatory-gaming-activities/

Non-toxic – video series: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLquEBbMvk_XrUgB5wrX_qDN3M0lFXs4Zy

Non-toxic Selvitys kilpailullisia tietokone- ja konsolipelejä pelaavien nuorten kokemuksista vihapuheesta ja häirinnästä. Alin, 2018 (Abstract in English, otherwise in Finnish). https://www.hel.fi/static/nk/Julkaisut/non-toxic.pdf

Non-Toxic – Pelikasvatusta kotona ja nuorisotyössä. Siutila, 2020 (Abstract in English, otherwise in Finnish) https://hel.fi/static/liitteet-2019/KuVa/julkaisut/NonToxic251120.pdf

SETA: https://en.seta.fi/lgbti-rights-in-finland-seta/

Seul ry gaming photo collection: https://seul.fi/seul/medialle/kuvapankki/

Seul ry (a guide to making esports events accessible, in Finnish): https://seul.fi/oppaat-ja-ohjeistukset/elektronisen-urheilun-esteettoman-tapahtuman-jarjestajan-opas/

Seul ry (code of conduct, in Finnish): https://seul.fi/yhteiso/eettinen-ohjeisto/

Gender Diversity & Intersex Centre of Expertise: https://sukupuolenosaamiskeskus.fi/english/

THL (glossary of gender equality terms, in Finnish): https://thl.fi/fi/web/sukupuolten-tasa-arvo/sukupuoli/tasa-arvosanasto

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman: https://syrjinta.fi/en/front-page

The Non-Discrimination Act is changing on 1 June 2023: https://syrjinta.fi/en/-/the-non-discrimination-act-is-changing-on-1-june-2023-amendments-improve-the-legal-protection-of-discrimination-victims

Equality information by the Ministry of Justice in Finland: https://yhdenvertaisuus.fi/en/frontpage

Act on Equality between Women and Men: https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1986/en19860609

Appendices

Here you can find the guide's templates, examples and a poster.

Template: Code of conduct

This code of conduct template is designed for a fictional service provider called GameY that organises gaming space and small group activities for young people. GameY has put its code of conduct on display on its website, mentions it to new customers and cooperation partners when presenting its services and goes over it with new employees as part of employee induction.

You can easily find other codes of conduct by doing online searches with the search term "code of conduct" and specifying the type of activity.

Code of conduct of GameY

GameY's code of conduct describes the values, goals and operating models that guide our everyday activities. One of its cornerstones is the idea that gaming culture belongs to everyone, regardless of personal background. We are committed to building gaming into a hobby that is open and safe for everyone and free of hate speech and harassment. We promote the common good by operating in a socially responsible manner and supporting Finnish gaming culture and gaming communities.

Our three most important values are:

Equality – All gamers are equally valuable and welcome to participate in our activities regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, origin, language, conviction or health. We do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their gaming skills or preferences. We are all passionate about different types of games and aspects of gaming culture, which serves to enrich and diversify our shared hobby. We strive to provide everyone with equal opportunities to participate in our activities. We develop our operations in a more equal direction based on received feedback.

Respect – Everyone is welcome to participate in our activities as themselves. We treat other people as we would like to be treated. We do not make assumptions about anyone, and we correct ourselves as necessary if we make mistakes in communication. We give everyone the time and peace required to operate in a manner that is comfortable for them in shared gaming situations. We support those who have experienced discrimination or inappropriate behaviour.

Responsibility – We take social circumstances and needs into account in all of our activities. We support Finnish gaming culture and gaming communities by participating in shared events, campaigns and activities. We share information about the structures, opportunities and challenges of gaming culture with people outside of the hobby as well. We build a strong knowledge-based foundation for our activities, which we also constantly review and develop based on researched information.

By participating in our activities as an instructor, player, employee of the organisation or guest, you agree to operate in an exemplary manner and adhere to our code of conduct in all meetings and situations related to the activities. Let us make GameY's activities safer for everyone together!

Template: Equality plan

An equality plan should include concrete objectives, measures, a timetable and person(s) responsible. It is important to define what each measure aims to achieve and how as well as when and by whom they will be implemented.

The planning process is continuous, and it is not necessary to take all identified needs into account in a single plan, as each updated version of the plan can focus on specific areas.

Activities and values

A summary of the organisation's/community's activities and the values that it has committed to.

Equality and non-discrimination

What is meant by equality and non-discrimination. See: Finland's Non-discrimination Act, Criminal Code, Equality Act and labour legislation.

Equality and non-discrimination plan

The purpose for which the plan was drawn up, who was involved, when it was drawn up and when it was approved.

Equality and non-discrimination survey

Implementation of the survey: If a survey was carried out to serve as a basis for the plan, explain how it was carried out, to whom it was shared, where it was shared and when. Provide a summary of the survey results.

Plan for the implementation of equality and non-discrimination

3–5 different measures. Describe their objectives, actions, persons responsible and timetables.

Evaluation of the implementation of the measures

If a previous plan exists, evaluate how its objectives and measures have been realised. Monitoring and updating of the plan. How monitoring will be carried out, over what time period and who is responsible.

APPENDIX 1: Survey form

If a survey was carried out to serve as a basis for the equality and non-discrimination plan, include the survey form as an appendix. Other appendices can be added as necessary.

Workshop for drawing up a safer space agreement

Supplies: Post-it notes, pens and a flip chart or large screen where everyone can see what the facilitator writes. A single workshop should have no more than 20 participants so that things can be discussed openly and everyone is heard.

Introduction: Explain your activities/situation from your perspective and why drawing up a safer space agreement is important.

Ask the participants to first independently consider e.g. the following: What do I need in order to participate? What do I need to feel safe/respected? What would a more equal and safer space where everyone is seen and heard be like? Ask the participants to write their thoughts down on Post-it notes. / 5 mins

Compile the answers on a large sheet of paper, in a shared document or in Padlet, for example. By name or anonymously, whichever feels more appropriate for the group.

Next, ask the participants to independently consider the following: How would you like others to behave in the shared space/activity? Ask them to write their thoughts down on Post-it notes. / 5 mins

Divide the participants into groups of approximately four or five. Smaller groups make discussion easier. Each group member shares their own thoughts out loud and discusses them within the group. Ask the groups to write down some of the highlights of their discussions. / 15 mins

The last step is to ask each group to share their highlights and compile them on a shared paper, document or Padlet. Next, use the shared highlights as the basis for drawing up the safer space agreement. Draw up the agreement so that the participants can see them. / 15 mins

Tell the participants where the agreement will be displayed and when it will be updated.

Example of a safer space agreement

Everyone is welcome to participate in our activities as themselves.

We work together to create an accepting and open atmosphere:

- A warm, inspiring, community-oriented environment where you can speak openly without being judged.

Everyone has the right to define themselves:

- We do not make assumptions about each other's identity or background.

- For us, diversity means diversity of sexuality, bodies, sex, gender, ethnicity and functional capacity, to name but a few.

Responsibility for your own behaviour and that of others:

- Take other people's comfort into consideration in your own behaviour.

- Each person has the right to mental and physical integrity. Every one of us has an obligation to intervene in inappropriate behaviour, physical and verbal harassment and discrimination or report them to the organisers.

- We do not question or belittle experiences of discrimination and harassment.

Relax:

- You are allowed to make mistakes and ask questions.